The Gazette

COLORADO SPRINGS • FEBRUARY 11, 2004 | WEDNESDAY | 50 CENTS DAILY • $1.25 SUNDAY

CITY COUNCIL | CRUCIAL VOTES

Water's on, but benefits denied

Springs, Pueblo agree on pipeline

By ED SEALOVER
THE GAZETTE

MORE: Other City Council action **Metro**

Colorado Springs and Pueblo have reached a historic agreement that will push forward construction of a water line needed for the Springs to continue to grow.

The Colorado Springs City Council and Pueblo Board of Water Works approved the deal Tuesday, and the Pueblo City Council is expected to vote on it tonight. If Pueblo approves it as expected, the biggest obstacle to the largest capital project in the history of Colorado Springs will be removed.

The 15-page agreement will end two years of fighting between the Springs and its neighbor to the south over use of Arkansas River water. The document will lay the groundwork for federal legislation that will direct the Bureau of Reclamation to proceed.

In addition to a 43-mile pipeline that will carry water from Pueblo Reservoir to Colorado Springs, the phased project ultimately will include expansions of the Pueblo and Turquoise reservoirs. Numer-

SEE **WATER** • PAGE 12

Plan would have covered gay partners

By ED SEALOVER
THE GAZETTE

Colorado Springs City Council members, on the verge of adopting what some called the most expansive municipal health insurance plan in America, instead dug in their heels Tuesday and decided to keep what they have.

After listening to a 3½-hour debate largely about morality, the council voted 5-4 against allowing the city's 8,453 employees to add anyone except spouses and children to their health plans.

A proposal written by Colorado Springs Independent publisher John Weiss sought to expand coverage to other household members, including same-sex partners, unmarried heterosexual partners, adult children and parents younger than 65. The employees would have to pay 100 percent of the premium.

Weiss, the first of 41 people to speak on the issue Tuesday, said he hoped to unite a city torn apart after the council eliminated benefits for same-sex partners in April. That plan had been adopt-

SEE **BENEFITS** • PAGE 11

Powerball
31, 34, 35, 39, 46
Powerball: **3**
Powerplay: **2**
Today's jackpot is an estimated $13 million.
Odds of winning the top prize: 1 in 120,526,770.

Lotto
5, 6, 10, 20, 33, 37
Today's jackpot is an estimated $6.4 million.
Odds of winning the top prize: 1 in 5,245,786.

Cash 5
13, 25, 26, 30, 32
Drawings are held Monday through Saturday.
Odds of winning the top prize: 1 in 201,376.

www.coloradolottery.com
Proceeds go to the Conservation Trust Fund, Colorado Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund, State Public School Fund and capital construction.

Wednesday

Daily Weather Eye
Mike Madson

The latest blast of winter will move ac Colorado today with a sharp drop in te winds and snow. Stay alert to watche advisories that may be issued, especia elevations. Tonight will be impressivel

Madson is a meteorologist for KKTV, Cha

SNOWPACK CONDITIONS

Arkansas River	83 % of Normal
Colorado River	85 % of Normal
Gunnison River	101 % of Normal
North Platte River	84 % of Normal
South Platte River	68 % of Normal
Yampa River	91 % of Normal

Source: Water and Climate Center Snotel Network

UV INDEX
The UV index forecasts the day's ultraviolet radiation intensity. The higher the number, the greater the need for skin and eye protection.

Low Moderate High

2

AIR QUALITY
Ozone: Good
At Air Force Academy
Particulates: Good
Carbon monoxide: Good
At Meadowland/Academy Blvd.

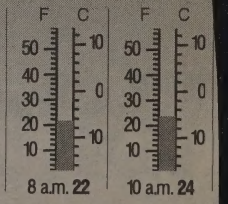
Source: El Paso County Department of Health and Environment

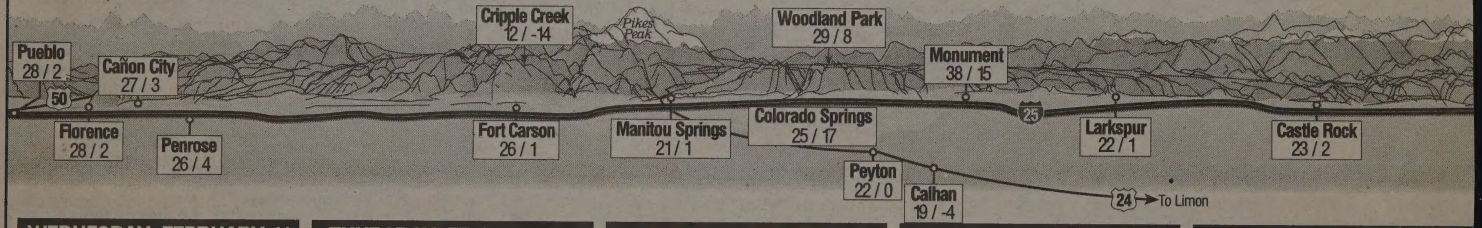
ASTRONOMICAL DATA

Last	New	First	Full
Feb. 13	Feb. 20	Feb. 28	Mar. 6

	Today		Thursday	
	Rises	Sets	Rises	Sets
Sun	6:55 a.m.	5:33 p.m.	6:53 a.m.	5:34 p.m.
Moon	11:31 p.m.	9:51 a.m.	none	10:20 a.m.

TODAY IN COLORADO SPRINGS
Today's records: 70 in 1962
-13 in 1981
Avalanche danger:
Central Mtns: Consid. to High
Southern Mtns: Consid. to High
Reservoir storage:
Reservoirs are 52.2% full.
Reservoirs are normally 76.1% full this time of the year.
Source: Colorado Springs Utilities





WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11
Windy and colder with snow at times.
HIGH LOW
25 / 17

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12
Isolated snow showers early, then breezy and cold.
HIGH LOW
23 / 0

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13
Partly cloudy and warmer after a cold start.
HIGH LOW
45 / 5

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14
Breezy and warmer.
HIGH LOW
47 / 17

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15
Breezy and cooler. Slight chance of rain/snow showers.
HIGH LOW
40 / 20

PEOPLE

LOCAL EVENTS

Today in COLORADO

City	Hi	Lo	Wx	City

BENEFITS: Focus official pleased

FROM PAGE 1

ed just five months earlier and was revoked by the new council at its first meeting after the spring election.

Instead, Weiss' proposal reignited the firestorm that has pitted Colorado Springs' religious conservatives against its gay and lesbian community since the passage in 1992 of Amendment 2 that prohibited laws protecting gays from discrimination based on sexual orientation. It was struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court.

The four members who backed the plan — Vice Mayor Richard Skorman and councilmen Jerry Heimlicher, Scott Hente and Larry Small — argued it was about helping employees, not backing gay rights. The plan was unlikely to cost city taxpayers any money and would improve the city's image nationally, they said.

Some opponents also focused on the economic impact. Mayor Lionel Rivera and Councilman Darryl Glenn said a quartet of consultants warned inclusion of parents could cost the city more than it brings in from its premiums.

HOW THEY VOTED

A resolution to allow Colorado Springs city employees to add household members – including same-sex partners, unmarried heterosexual partners, adult children and parents under 65 – to health insurance plans at 100 percent cost to the employee.

AGAINST

Mayor Lionel Rivera
Tom Gallagher
Darryl Glenn
Randy Purvis
Margaret Radford

FOR

Vice Mayor Richard Skorman
Jerry Heimlicher
Scott Hente
Larry Small

Councilwoman Margaret Radford, however, said there was no way to separate these benefits from the long-running fight over gay rights. In the end, she said, this city is not ready for this plan.

"Our job is to find a common ground. There is no common ground on moral issues," Radford told a crowd that at one point spilled out of council chambers into a hallway. "I hope after today we will pledge to not come back to this issue again, and I hope we pledge to stick to issues that are rightly ours."

Weiss said after the vote that he will drop the benefits idea and move on to other issues.

Peter Brandt, issues response director for conservative Christian ministry Focus on the Family, said he was pleased the council upheld the "sanctity of marriage."

Council members who backed the benefits proposal accused the ministry of helping defeat it by making an employee benefits issue into a debate over gay rights.

Heimlicher and Small said they were told by Focus backers they would be recalled from office if they supported the plan, although Brandt said he knew nothing of a recall effort.

Still, Focus' opposition set the tone of Tuesday's debate.

Most who addressed the council focused on what they saw as the morality or immorality of the plan.

Opponents argued homosexuals violate God's rules. In response, the president of the Pikes Peak Community College Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual, Trans-Gender Alliance said Christianity teaches that everyone should be treated with compassion.

affected areas must give consent

"It may be one of the most important decisions that this council had a part and role in playing."
VICE MAYOR RICHARD SKORMAN

the Pueblo State Hospital and the Colorado State Fair.

In return, Pueblo will settle a water case out of court and support federal legislation, which probably will be sponsored by 5th District Congressman Joel Hefley.

Construction of the pipeline phase could begin by 2006 and finish in 2009, utility regional projects manager Gary Bostrom said.

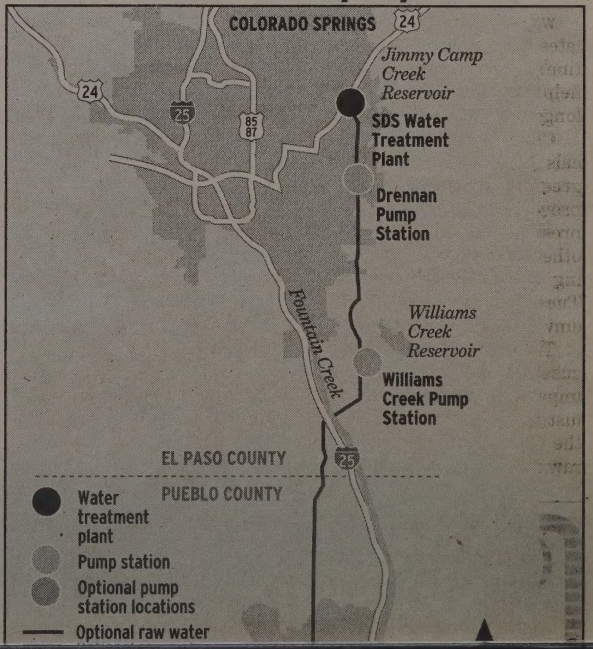
"It may be one of the most important decisions that this council had a part and role in playing," Vice Mayor Richard Skorman said. "When this council came aboard, it was [illegible] depleted

Springs officials.

But the nine-person City Council went to Pueblo and met with that council. Then Mayor Lionel Rivera and Councilwoman Margaret Radford began meeting with Pueblo council president Bill Sova and vice president Randy Thurston and hammered out the agreement during a seven-month period.

More work remains.

Assuming Pueblo approves the agreement, other affected cities and water districts, including Fountain and Aurora, must give their OK in the next 90 days.

After that, the federal government conducts a permitting process sure to be scrutinized by environmentalists and Pueblo County, where much of the pipeline will run. Congress must pass a bill authorizing expansion of the Pueblo Reservoir — a process bound to be opposed by Kansas, where offi-

Southern Delivery System